All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

Post #4

Chapters 9-10

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**Summary:** In Chapter 9, Paul returns to the front lines after training camp and finds that his friends are alive and uninjured. Soon after, the German emperor visits the front lines but Paul is not impressed when he realizes that wars are only a tool for world leaders to be remembered in history. Paul then volunteers to be a spy and enter the No Man’s Land, an unclaimed area between French and German trenches. Shell bombing ensues and suddenly Paul finds himself in face to face combat with a French soldier who he eventually stabs. The soldier does not die right away and after conversing with him, Paul realizes how not only has he ruined one man’s life but also the lives of his family members. Paul feels so guilty for his actions but is somewhat cheered up when he and his friends are assigned to guard a supply dump in an abandoned village. They find lots of food and luxurious items to keep themselves busy with for three weeks. Then the group moves to a new village and there, Paul suffers a broken leg and wounded arm and is transferred to a hospital. At the hospital Paul meets a 40 year-old soldier, Lewandowski, who is about to see his wife for the first time in two years and though he is bed-ridden he wants to sleep with her. The other soldiers help Lewandowski by guarding his hospital room from the nun and doctor while he shares time with his wife.

**Analysis:** The two chapters take on very different tones in my opinion. In Chapter 9, Paul’s fight with a French soldier that ends with the Frenchman dying is one of the most eye opening sections of the book. It’s Paul’s first time with hand to hand combat and because the French soldier doesn’t die right away, Paul sees the suffering and pain in his eyes. I think it is here that Paul really feels his resentment for the concept of war. Here is a man with a wife and child, who is not much different than Paul, who is dying because of the decision of fewer than 30 powerful men. World War I is known for the way it dehumanized much of the world but this moving passage really brings things into a frightening perspective. The scene in Chapter 10 with Paul’s friends finding a surplus of food is one of the few light-hearted and uplifting scenes in the book. Another one comes later in Chapter 10 when the soldiers in the hospital band together to help Lewandowski, a fellow soldier who hasn’t slept with his wife in two years. It’s a sign that not all humanity has been lost through the course of the war.

**Application**: One thing that I’ve picked up on is that it seems that all humans have a connection to one another. There is a common bond between humans because we are all humans. We are all one of the same species. This is a thought that has become extremely apparent to Paul, especially in the last chapter when he comes face to face with the enemy. Though Paul has been trained to hate the French, once he is stuck with a French soldier who is slowly dying, a connection is built between the two. All humans have the ability to relate to each other because at the core, we are all the same creature. In life we as a people, including me, get caught up in our what we as an individual want for ourselves rather than understanding the people around us. There may be a person we dislike with a passion, but underneath the differences I believe there is a common bond. We as humans share a sense of camaraderie whether we are aware of it or not.